

Course evaluations report

SOSANT2000 – Current themes in contemporary anthropology

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Course evaluations were carried out on March 16, 2026. The format we selected for the evaluations featured four open ended questions, which students addressed in writing during class. These were the same questions that we used the previous year, and that we decided to repropose because 1) they had proved to be useful; 2) we had made some slight changes since last year, partly based on students' feedback; and 3) it is likely that this is the last year we run SOSANT2000 given the BA reform hence we did not want to introduce questions that could prompt a significant rehauling of the course. The key aims of the evaluations were therefore the following:

- To gain practical, hands-on feedback on how to improve lectures and in-class activities for the rest of the term.
- To assess to what extent the course was meeting its stated objectives in the eyes of the students, and what (if anything) was missing.

The four questions we asked were the following:

1. What elements of lecture have been most beneficial to your learning? Lectures, group presentations, something else? Is there something we could do in class to further help your learning?
2. Are the readings comprehensible and useful? How can we help you better understand and engage with the reading? Is the distinction between core and supplementary readings useful, or is it confusing?
3. What elements of the seminars have been most beneficial to your learning? Discussion of lectures and readings, feedback on reflection essays, something else? Is there something we could do in the seminars to further help your learning?
4. If you could change or add one thing to this course, what would it be? For example, are there topics missing from the present syllabus or lectures, that you would like to discuss? Or topics (or readings) that you do not find particularly interesting? Or, is there something about the structure of the course that you would change?

In total, 27 students submitted their responses. In what follows, we summarize students' feedback around the four key themes that emerge from the evaluations, before discussing some of the suggestions that students made and how we plan to implement them (or not).

Summary:

Lectures: generally positive feedback. Students appreciate the style and tone of lectures, and find them interesting and engaging. They also like the weekly recaps that we offer at the beginning of each lecture.

Group Presentations: The students' response to these is somewhat mixed (as has been the case for the past 2 years). Some students appreciate them and even praise them as one of the most productive moments of the course, others find they take too much time.

Readings: Readings are mostly appreciated by the students. They especially appreciate that most texts are relatively recent and speak to topics of current concern. One student made an interesting point suggesting reading an entire ethnographic book throughout the course.

Seminars: here the feedback is consistently positive, students show much appreciation for the seminars which are deemed useful and engaging.

Reflection essays: generally good feedback, students find it useful if at times “stressful”

Suggestions

Students made some practical suggestions, namely:

- lecturers could spend more time in class discussing the readings;
- there should be more focus on gender and feminism;
- presentations should take place in seminar: these would take less time away from lecture, imply less stress for presenting students, and offer more time for actual feedback.

Conclusions and planned changes

In general, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and clearly points to the fact that there is no need for an overhaul of the course. Still, small adjustments can surely be made and these can be beneficial for in-class participation, and students’ overall comprehension of key notions and texts. Below, we list changes that we plan to implement this term, and others that we will consider for next year. These include:

- Re-think the role and position of group presentations in the course. It might be worth considering moving those to the seminars – and in this way, use the seminars to also focus on oral presentation skills which as far as we understand students get very few chances to practice in the program.
- It might not be possible to add a section specifically on gender and feminism, but we could add some readings as part of existing sessions.
- Change at least one of the readings in the first session, and in general look for more recent literature where possible. Swap the Latour text with something easier to read/digest. Consider the introduction of a monograph.
- Finally, we would recommend making attendance at a certain percentage of seminars obligatory (perhaps 80%). Although the feedback on the seminars is overwhelmingly positive, attendance is low. As a result, few students are getting the benefit of the close reading and discussion course readings that take place in the seminars. Moreover, those who do attend benefit less when low rates of attendance make it difficult or impossible to run discussion activities in seminars as planned.